

people showed less fear of me—I was the first Englishwoman they had ever seen—and the Dhroo and chief men came to see me off, and beg that one of us would come on the morrow.

It was dark when Mandvi was reached, and there was excitement over the cobra, which was displayed in the verandah, and then thrown away.

The next day my friend went to Gundiali, and had four admissions, and the day following the other sister just for the one day, as she preferred remaining in Mandvi, and then came my turn. The journey to and fro and working through the hot hours of the day we found very trying, and leaving them from 6 p.m. to 9 a.m. the next day, most unsatisfactory, so we petitioned Dr. M. to let us remain out at Gundiali a week at a time by turn, then packing the few things necessary, and relying on our thoughtful old Goanese butler at the bungalow to send out what food stuffs would be wanted, and a cook to follow after, I bade good-bye to my two friends for a week, and began tent-life in the jungle with its novelty, limitations, and great opportunities for studying the people.

Gundiali is a considerable village, with 5,000 inhabitants, with a bazaar, several Hindu temples and mosques, and many shrines.

The hospital was soon in working order, four sepoy were sent out as orderlies, and an ayah from the village was engaged, and was really very useful to us in washing the patients, and helping in many ways.

The Dhroo was a most intelligent man, who had learned English in Bhuj when he was a boy, and though only twenty-six years of age, and poor, he was much respected by the people, and was of the greatest assistance to us all the time we were in the village, he never took bribes—which is a very common practice all over India—and daily headed search parties in the village or the gardens round, to which many of the people had fled in terror at the approach of Plague, or the other villages under him. With his little knowledge of English, and our slowly increasing knowledge of the people's language, we were able to get on.

From the first day, a Brahmin boy, Mamoo Damoder, attached himself to me, ever ready to do anything for me, or go anywhere, would sit outside my tent cutting nice little native pens for me from a kind of cane, and was always bringing me curious little gifts.

On the last day of my "week," he came and said, "Memsahib was fond of animals and snakes, had she ever seen a "beechu"? I did not know; he then produced two tiny earthen jars, tied down with linen, and with an admonitory "Kabadar ho" (take care) he let the "beechus" loose. Not knowing what to expect, I was kneeling on the floor of my tent, with a tumbler in one hand and dissecting forceps in the other. I knew them then—they were scorpions, and I was not long in clapping the tumbler over one of them, while Mamoo deftly removed the thorn-like sting from the other with my forceps. I could not tell a Hindu that I meant to kill them and preserve them in spirits, for that would be a crime in their eyes, so I brought them into Mandvi tied down in a glass bottle. I failed to get the spirit of wine, and tried native spirit, but they quickly decomposed and had to be thrown away like so many other interesting things, for want of suitable apparatus for preserving. Mamoo taught me the Gugerati alphabet (the written language of Cutch, while Cutchee is the spoken) and he learned the English; he took me for my first camel ride, for

my first gallop over the Maidan in a native rakera, with the small Cutchee byles or bullocks, into the first Hindu temple, where having put my shoes off I was gladly received, and Mamoo and the Dhroo came to bid me good-bye when I left Cutch 9 months later for the last time. Often he implored me to take him to England as my servant, and it was with sorrow I learnt when the Dhroo wrote to me 6 weeks ago that Mamoo had died of plague, and his father and mother a few days later. On my return to Mandvi, my friend took my place, but as plague was rapidly increasing, in 3 days I was sent out again, another tent was set up by the other, and the next 2 months we shared the work.

There was a good bit of monotony about our food, and lemonade and soda water was scalding hot after coming from Mandvi, and our Goanese cook, when he came for orders, never varied the formula, "for tiffin Mem Sahib, make some roast, make some fry?" which I think we shall never forget. He did some funny things. We had sent for a kidney dressing bowl for the hospital, one that had often been used at the Brahmappoori, which got to our cook with our other stores. Never shall we forget our custard pudding being sent to us in it. We did not consider ourselves faddy, it would have been unwise in the jungle, but, we declined this.

We did not like the insects at first—the big black ant, and the more numerous, ever-present red ant, that shared our every repast, the huge locusts, and every other sort of hopping insect, the death's-head moth—there was something awesome in its approach, its long tongue protruded, seeking the flowers whose scent had drawn it into our tents, and the toads of all sizes growing sleek and fat by the insects the rain had brought. I dug up what appeared two small pieces of clear amber in the sand of my bath-room, they were the glowing eyes of a big toad buried there. But the pie dogs were our special bêtes noirs. Though we had men to watch our tents, they often slept, and entrance of course was easy by any of the four doorways, with only reed curtains to keep them out. Each corner would be occupied by them, but it was annoying to be awoke by a fifth quarrelling and disputing the right to any one of them, especially so as many of them were suffering from fearful diseases, the Hindu religion forbidding them to be killed under any circumstances. Use is second nature, and we soon grew philosophic over these minor things.

26th January, 1899.

A. J.

Plague at Zanzibar.

A Reuter's telegram from St. Denis, Island of Reunion, states that bubonic plague has broken out at Zanzibar. This is grave news, and we hope that the nursing staff on the island will be speedily re-inforced. There is an English Hospital, supported by the Universities Mission to Central Africa, doing excellent work, and a French hospital, nursed by sisters; but, already the English hospital is shorthanded, and if help in the present emergency is not forthcoming, it will mean overstrain, and probably loss of life, to those who are working most bravely in a most unhealthy climate. Soon the rainy season will begin, and the drying up of the rain always means much malaria and plenty of work for nurses.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)